

Jaro Fabry

American, 1912–1953

Illustration of Greta Garbo on the cover of *Cinema Arts* (June 1937)

Illustration of Katharine Hepburn on the cover of *Cinema Arts* (July 1937)

Illustration of Joan Crawford on the cover of *Cinema Arts* (September 1937)

The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Exhibition Title
2023 Before
Technicolor:
Early Motion
Picture Color

Label Format
Regular

Label ID
613225ca

Last Updated
4/13/2023
7:28:22 PM

Updated By
Jackie Neudorf

Katharine Hepburn as Joan of Arc in a screen test for an unrealized film 1934

Digital video from 35 mm film
(Technicolor, silent)
2:26 min.

The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Exhibition Title
2023 Before
Technicolor:
Early Motion
Picture Color

Label Format
Regular

Label ID
613225ee

Last Updated
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Updated By
Francisco Valente

Technicolor Tests 1933–36, compiled 1954
Digital video from 35 mm film
(Technicolor, silent)
10:30 min.

Produced by Pioneer Pictures, United States

The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Exhibition Title
2023 Before
Technicolor:
Early Motion
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Regular

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613225f4

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7:13:06 PM

Updated By
Will Rhodes

The earliest color films were made around 1895, when new, synthetically produced dyes transformed the nature of color in mediums such as postcards, magic lantern slides, and fabrics. For moviegoers of the period, color added to films shot in black and white was an attractive “special effect.” The coloring task could involve as many as two hundred women engaged in the time-consuming and labor-intensive process of applying dyes with a brush directly onto each frame of a release print—the copy of a film distributed to theaters for screenings.

Dance films were a genre favored by early color filmmakers. This selection of hand and stencil-colored films show their subjects moving rapidly against black backgrounds, which helped mask coloring errors.

Exhibition Title
2023 Before
Technicolor:
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61322a5d

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Updated By
Will Rhodes

Women played a key role in the history of early color film: not only did they labor behind the scenes in coloring workshops, they also modeled colorful clothing on screen and in print, serving as messengers of color’s arrival as a cultural phenomenon. Movie stars like Greta Garbo, Katharine Hepburn, Joan Crawford, and Marlene Dietrich appearing on covers and spreads from the upscale fan magazine *Cinema Arts* made the science of color photography seem stylish and fashionable. The highly saturated hues of Technicolor were achieved by running three black-and-white filmstrips through a special camera simultaneously. Each strip recorded a different color of the spectrum, which were then combined in printing to produce a full color image.

Exhibition Title
2023 Before
Technicolor:
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Label Format
Regular

Label ID
61322a63

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1:59:11 PM

Updated By
Will Rhodes

Technicolor was in a late stage of development when this screen test of Katharine Hepburn as Joan of Arc was shot in 1934. Although the feature film was never made, this experiment with a major star of the period demonstrates investors’ faith in the process. By the end of the decade, *Gone with the Wind* and *The Wizard of Oz* (both 1939) fulfilled Technicolor’s promise. John Hay Whitney, whose company Pioneer Pictures produced the test, was the first president of MoMA’s Film Library.

Exhibition Title
2023 Before
Technicolor:
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Label Format
Regular

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61322a69

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2:00:56 PM

Updated By
Will Rhodes

In the decades before Technicolor proved capable of reproducing a full spectrum of colors closer to those of the real world, colorists indulged in the imaginative possibilities of the techniques available to them. When applied to theatrical and fantastic subjects, as they most commonly were, hand-coloring, stencil-coloring, and monotone tinting and toning resulted in special effects that appear surreal and even psychedelic. Before 1914, when the outbreak of World War I curtailed production, the French companies Star Film (founded by Georges Méliès), Gaumont, and Pathé led the international field with the most ambitious and sophisticated application of color on film.

Exhibition Title
2023 Before
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Label Format
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Label ID
61322a71

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5:54:21 PM

Updated By
Jackie Neudorf

Acquired by MoMA’s Film Library shortly after it was founded in 1935, the films in this exhibition are among the least-known moving image subjects in the Museum’s collection. In this gallery are *Sunshine Gatherers* (1921), an advertisement for canned fruit made with the short-lived Prizma-color process; *L’antre infernal* (1905), an extravagantly colored trick film (a genre of silent film featuring illusions created using special effects); *La voix du rossignol* (1923), a stencil-colored film that incorporates stop-motion animation; and *Technicolor Tests* (1933–36), a unique compilation in which an animated dinosaur from *King Kong* (1933) appears. Together, they illustrate how the Film Library met its mandate to collect and preserve the history and achievements of silent and early sound cinema.

Exhibition Title
2023 Before
Technicolor:
Early Motion
Picture Color

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Regular

Label ID
61322a77

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7:14:59 PM

Updated By
Will Rhodes

W. K. L. Dickson

British, born France. 1860–1935

Butterfly Dance by Annabelle 1894

Digital video from 35 mm film

(black and white, silent)

21 sec.

Serpentine Dance by Annabelle 1895

Digital video from 35 mm film

(hand-color, silent)

14 sec.

Produced by Edison Manufacturing Company,
United States

C. Francis Jenkins

American, 1867–1934

Serpentine Dance 1896

Digital video from 35 mm film

(hand-color, silent)

52 sec.

Produced by C. Francis Jenkins

Segundo de Chomón

Spanish, 1871–1929

Ferdinand Zecca

French, 1864–1947

Excerpt of **Métempsychose** 1907

Digital video from 35 mm film

(stencil-color, silent)

30 sec.

Produced by Pathé, France

The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Exhibition Title

2023 Before

Technicolor:

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6132252b

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7:12:33 PM

Updated By

Will Rhodes

LEFT TO RIGHT:

George E. Stone

American

Sunshine Gatherers 1921

Digital video from 35 mm film

(Prizma-color, silent)

9:36 min.

Produced by Prizma Natural Color Pictures
Inc., United States

Gaston Velle

French, born Italy. 1868–1953

L'antre infernal (The Infernal Cave) 1905

Digital video from 35 mm film

(stencil-color, silent)

3:12 min.

Produced by Pathé, France

The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Wladyslaw Starewicz

Polish-Russian, 1882–1965

La voix du rossignol (The Voice of the Nightingale) 1923

Digital video from 35 mm film

(stencil-color, silent)

11:02 min.

Produced by Pathé, France

The Museum of Modern Art, New York

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